

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4904

July 7, 2009

The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I write to commend your decision to visit Ghana in your trip overseas this week. Choosing Ghana as the first African country you visit as President sends a clear signal that the United States is committed to promoting and strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law. Ghana has made significant progress in this regard and while it is imperative that we continue to work with President Atta Mills to continue this progress, a strong foundation already exists. By supporting and spotlighting Ghana, we can help make it an example for other countries on the continent.

At the same time, I hope you will use your visit, albeit brief, to outline your administration's top policy priorities in West Africa and throughout the continent more broadly. To that end, I write to offer my thoughts on a few key issues that I urge you to address in your private meetings and in any public statements you make while visiting Ghana.

First, as you may know, there has been a sharp rise in the quantity of cocaine transiting through West Africa from Latin America en route to Europe. I held a subcommittee hearing last month to explore this problem. The UN Office of Drugs and Crime now estimates there is roughly 50 tons of cocaine being smuggled through the region a year, worth almost two billion dollars. This new trend is deeply alarming, because of the potential impact on the many weak states in West Africa. The massive profits gained from the drug trade can also potentially be used to fund criminal and violent enterprises in the region, if they are not already. Ghana is one major hub through which cocaine increasingly enters the region, so it is very relevant to your trip. We need to scale up our attention and resources in order to help address this problem before it becomes entrenched.

Second, I am concerned by new reports suggesting that efforts to combat corruption throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa are faltering. As you know well, corruption discourages private investment, hampers economic growth and undermines governance institutions. The United States has long pledged to help

Africans fighting corruption, but we need to back up that rhetoric with a demonstrated commitment to investigate, identify, and hold accountable foreign government officials engaged in kleptocracy. Simultaneously, we should better target our assistance to strengthen the capacities of rule of law institutions, particularly in helping to build strong, independent judicial systems. Anti-corruption measures should also be better streamlined into all of our foreign assistance activities and we should press the International Financial Institutions to do the same.

Third, related to the issue of corruption is the problem of lack of transparency in the management of extractive industries across much of Africa. Despite their considerable wealth, Africa's leading oil producing nations remain home to some of the worst poverty in the world and are consistently rated as some of the world's most corrupt countries. With nearly a dozen African countries, including Ghana, in the early stages of oil and natural gas exploration, we need to help them avoid what is often called the "resource curse." The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) is a good tool to helping address this curse, particularly given that 16 of the 23 current candidate countries are in Africa. We should provide tangible assistance to help these countries implement EITI and make it a more central component of our engagement with them, while supporting civil society to play a more active watchdog role.

I appreciate your consideration of my suggestions and wish you a safe and productive trip. I know you share my view that it is critical that the United States has a long-term strategic approach to promoting stability and sustainable partnerships in Africa and your visit to Ghana – the earliest visit to Africa by a sitting American president – is an important sign of your commitment to develop such an approach.

I look forward to working together with you on each of these issues when you return.

Sincerely,



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Russell D. Feingold  
Chairman, Subcommittee on African Affairs  
United States Senate